

1212 EAST TWELFTH AVENUE (BOARDING HOUSE)  
Ybor City  
Tampa  
Hillsborough County  
Florida

HABS FL-555  
*FL-555*

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
SOUTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
100 Alabama St. NW  
Atlanta, GA 30303

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### 1212 EAST TWELFTH AVENUE (Boarding House)

HABS No. FL-555

**Location:** 1212 East Twelfth Avenue, Tampa, Hillsborough County, Florida.

**Significance:** This building's architectural and historical significance is derived from its contribution to the Ybor City National Register Historic Landmark District. Ybor City is a section of Tampa founded and built by Vicente M. Ybor and Ignacio Haya as a cigar-manufacturing center and town. This company town was planned by Gavino Gutierrez to include cigar factories, workers housing, public spaces, and commercial buildings. This district is significant for its importance to Tampa's architectural heritage, as it contains many of the City's best remaining examples of late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century domestic, religious, commercial, and industrial buildings. This house represents cigar factory worker housing within the larger context of the cigar manufacturing company town.

**Description:** Constructed ca. 1910, this rectangular, two-story Frame Vernacular former duplex has a wood frame structural system and rests on brick piers. The gable roof is surfaced with 5-V crimp sheet metal, and the exterior is sheathed in wood siding. A full-width integral porch is featured on the front façade. The porch is supported by fluted tapered columns atop brick piers, with a wood slat railing that rests on a poured concrete landing. Fenestration consists of wood double-hung sash windows with one-over-one and two-over-two light configurations, as well as replacement metal single-hung sash windows with two-over-two light configurations. Exterior ornamentation includes cornerboards, exposed rafter tails, gable vents, and porch elements. The main entrance features sidelights and a transom window. A second entrance on the front porch provides access to the second story of the building. The only major alteration to the exterior of the building is the enclosure of the second story of the originally two-story front porch.

In recent years, the interior of the building was renovated to accommodate eleven individual tenant rooms. The first floor consists of a central hallway with three tenant rooms on each side and a kitchen and two bathrooms stretching the width of the rear of the building. The second floor which is only accessed from the exterior of the building through the entrance off the front porch, and two other exterior staircases, consists of a great room with five tenant rooms off of it, as well as a bathroom and kitchen at the rear of the building accessed by a hallway off the great room. To accomplish the conversion to a boarding house, walls were added and doorways filled in. The wall and floor treatments were replaced during this process and the bathroom and kitchens were also renovated. Some original interior features such as door casings, chair rail, and archways remain.

**History:** Ybor City was platted in the 1890s and was completely built out by the mid-1920s. This residence was built ca. 1910 in the Morey Heights Subdivision. The house is located on the north side of East Twelfth Avenue, within the larger area of Ybor City that contained residences, factories, and commercial buildings. This house first appears in the Tampa City Directory of

1910. It was a single family residence occupied by F. Meade, who was employed as a cigar packer.

According to the previous owner, the house was purchased by brothers Rosario and Angelo Mortellaro in the late 1910s and members of the Mortellaro family owned the property until it was purchased by the Florida Department of Transportation.

Rosario Mortellaro was a consigliere in the Italian Club of Tampa and active in the Democratic Party. He ran a small coffee mill on the property and delivered coffee to his neighbors in Ybor City. The Mortellaro family was close with Mayor Nick Nuccio in the 1950s and 1960s and he was said to have spent many Sunday afternoons at the house. In recent years the building was subdivided into multiple apartment units and functioned as a boarding house.

**Sources:**

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**Historian:**

Kim Norton and Robert J. Taylor Jr., Janus Research, December 11, 2007